

R E M A R K S

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on January 24, 2006. The controlling steps in claims 1 and 6 are amended, based upon such disclosure as that in the specification, from line 9 on page 27 through line 11 on page 28 and in Figure 4B, step 150. The features of claims 19 and 23 are incorporated into claim 18, and claims 19 and 23 are accordingly cancelled. No new matter is introduced by this Amendment. Entry of this Amendment in order to place the application into condition for allowance - or into better condition for appeal - is respectfully solicited. With this Amendment, claims 1, 6, 7, 18, 20-22, and 24-26 are pending in the application.

Claims 1, 6, 7, and 18-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by JP 09-124200 (Yoshiaki). The rejection does not apply to the claims as amended herein.

Independent claims 1 and 6

The invention of present independent claims 1 and 6 is distinguished from Yoshiaki by at least two features: (1) the sheet detectors disposed at the entrance side and exit sides of the branch path, and (2) by stopping conveyance of the sheets if passage of the sheets is not detected by the sheet detectors in the predetermined time.

Regarding feature (1), the sheet detectors are disposed at entrance and exit sides of each of the processing operations or the processing sections, and at the entrance side and exit sides of the branch path of each of the processing operations or the processing sections. Conveyance or manufacture of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is controlled based on the results of detection by the sheet detectors. In the present invention, sheet detectors are disposed at the entrance side and the exit sides of the branch path. For example, if a sheet detector at the entrance side is 60A, sheet detectors at the exit sides are 60B and 60C (see Figure 2).

In Yoshiaki, a sheet detector is not disposed both at one side of the entrance side and at the exit sides of the branch path. For example, if the detector 68 in Yoshiaki is the detector at the entrance side, only the counter 70 is disposed as the sheet detector at one of the exit sides, and no sheet detector is disposed at the other exit side at the collection gate side. Further, if the sample counter 72 and the collecting counter 74 are the sheet detectors at the exit sides, no sheet detector is disposed at the entrance side. Therefore, passage of the sheets is not detected at the entrance side.

Thus, Yoshiaki does not disclose sheet detectors disposed at both the entrance side and exit sides of the branch path and, therefore, the present invention is distinct from Yoshiaki.

Regarding feature (2), Yoshiaki performs only checking of whether the number of produced sheets agrees with the number of collected sheets for each lot or each whole film. Accordingly it cannot be known where, for example, failure occurs at any of the processing operations or processing sections and, therefore, a follow-up check is needed in such a case. See page 3, lines 5-10 of the present specification.

In the invention of claims 1 and 6, conveyance of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is stopped if passage of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is not detected by the sheet detectors within a predetermined time. Therefore, processing can be stopped promptly if, for example, failure occurs in any of the processing operations or processing sections.

Yoshiaki does not disclose or suggest the above feature and, therefore, the present invention is patentably distinct from Yoshiaki.

Independent claim 18

The invention of present independent claim 18 is distinguished from Yoshiaki by at least two features: (1) determination is made as to whether or not any failure has occurred, and (2) stopping conveyance of the sheets is based on a determination of failure.

As pointed out above, in Yoshiaki, the only checking performed is of whether the number of produced sheets agrees with the number

of collected sheets for each lot or each whole film. Accordingly in Yoshiaki's system it cannot be known where, for example, failure occurs at any of the processing operations or processing sections.

In the invention of claim 18, conveyance of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is stopped if failure occurs in any of the processing operations or processing sections.

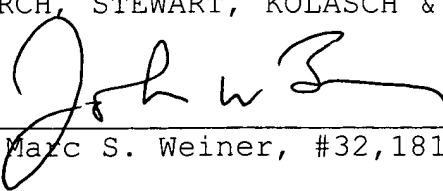
Yoshiaki neither teaches nor suggests the above features and, therefore, the present invention is distinct from Yoshiaki.

Applicants submit that none of claims 1, 6, 7, 18, 20-22, and 24-26 is drawn to subject matter disclosed or suggested by JP 09-124200 (Yoshiaki). Applicants submit that the rejection of record should be reconsidered and withdrawn.


Please contact Richard Gallagher (Reg. No. 28,781) at (703) 205-8008 with any questions concerning the present application.

Respectfully submitted,
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